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INFO RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT OF SPAIN 000698

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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR (FORTIN AND LUFTIG)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL EAID PTER SNAR TD

SUBJECT: CARICOM URGES PRESIDENT BUSH TO SPEED DECISION ON CWC IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

REF: BRIDGETOWN 00935

¶11. Acting Foreign Minister Danny Montano summoned the Ambassador to a meeting on June 6 to deliver a letter from Prime Minister Patrick Manning to President Bush (text of letter below). Political Officer accompanied the Ambassador. The letter echoes the sentiments of the letter sent by Barbados PM Arthur (reftel). CARICOM asked Manning to draft the letter in his capacity as current Chairman of CARICOM and also because he holds the security portfolio. Montano noted that while there have been a number of discussions about USG assistance for Cricket World Cup 2007 (CWC), CARICOM has yet to receive word on the proposed border control initiative (or "Smartcard" entry/exit system) proposed by Homeland Security. Montano pointed out that CARICOM needs to know if the project will move forward, or if they will need to look at alternatives to ensure an adequate system is in place in time.

¶12. The Ambassador turned to DHS Secretary Chertoff's planned visit to T&T at the end of the month and noted that the letter might be overkill since Secretary Chertoff will likely discuss this and other regional security issues with CARICOM. A representative from the Prime Minister's office with CWC coordination responsibility noted that this letter was an outgrowth of the conclusions from a recent ad-hoc meeting in Jamaica, to which DHS sent a representative to discuss the Smartcard immigration system. She further noted that T&T had anticipated a more bilateral-focused meeting with Secretary Chertoff, but that she would clarify this issue with the Prime Minister and liaise with Political Officer in developing an agenda.

¶13. COMMENT: This letter underscores that the clock continues to tick loudly on the Cricket World Cup Smartcard system. T&T has taken a pragmatic view of the situation, hoping that the USG comes through with its promised assistance, but ready to make contingency plans should it fall through. Post requests guidance as soon as Homeland Security makes a final decision on the system. When Secretary Chertoff travels to T&T he is likely to face CARICOM questions on the Smartcard system. END COMMENT.

¶14. BEGIN TEXT OF LETTER (original has been pouched, and a copy faxed to WHA/CAR):

June 05, 2006

Dear Mr. President:

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of

the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Prime Minister with lead responsibility for Security within the Community.

In that capacity I have been kept fully aware of the on-going discussions between officials of CARICOM and the Department of Homeland Security on the deepening of cooperation between the United States of America and the Caribbean Community on border security issues, with specific emphasis on the prevention of terrorism, trans-national crime and non-traditional migration.

I have received very encouraging reports on progress made during those discussions in the conceptualization and development of a system of border control for implementation in the Caribbean Community as a prototype for a possible Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

CARICOM Governments are agreed that early implementation of the proposed Border Control Initiative for the Caribbean Community will be a vital component of the Region's preparations for the hosting of Cricket World Cup 2007. We are equally convinced that this Initiative will make a significant contribution to the continuing and shared efforts of the Government of the United States of America and the Caribbean Community to protect our citizens and to safeguard our Region and Hemisphere.

I understand that the Initiative has been viewed most positively by officials of your Government, including the Secretary of State, with whom it was raised during her meeting with CARICOM Foreign Ministers in March

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this year, and that it now awaits final consideration and approval by the Department of Homeland Security.

The Caribbean Community is confident that it can count on the support of the United States in ensuring the viability and successful implementation of this project, which is of the highest priority to CARICOM, and which we believe is an important tool in the building of the secure, stable and prosperous neighbourhood to which we are both so strongly committed.

It is in this spirit that I write to request your personal support in this matter as we seek to secure the formal approval of the United States Government, through the Department of Homeland Security, for the realisation of this important initiative.

I look forward to your early and most favorable consideration of this matter.

Please accept, Mr President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

[SIGNED]

Patrick Manning
END TEXT

AUSTIN